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Wireless Internet service up and running in Lowville area

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LOWVILLE — Wireless Internet service has arrived in the Lowville area and soon will expand to surrounding towns.

RidgeviewTel, Longmont, Colo., also recently extended service to the Theresa area, company president Vincent T. Jordan said.

"It's turning out really well for us," Mr. Jordan said. "We're definitely happy."

RidgeviewTel, which provides wireless Internet service in 25 Colorado communities, is working to establish a network in more than a dozen communities throughout the tri-county area. Premier Wireless, Canton, also is developing a wireless network in St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties.

Both companies are looking to provide high-speed Internet access to rural areas without it.

While unsure of an exact customer total, Mr. Jordan said installation crews are adding 20 to 30 customers per week and have a "backlog" of requests. RidgeviewTel had about 1,000 customers in late June.

RidgeviewTel recently installed an antenna on the roof of the Lewis County courthouse on North State Street, providing a connection with the Development Authority of the North Country fiber-optic line. About a week ago, the company began broadcasting a WiFi, or wireless fidelity, signal — expected to cover a 5- to 7-mile radius — from that location.

RidgeviewTel also has established a wireless connection to the county's emergency radio tower near the hamlet of Crystal Dale and plans to begin broadcasting a signal from there soon, providing service to Watson and New Bremen. "That gear will be going up in the next week or so," Mr. Jordan said.

The company then plans to create a temporary, wireless connection to Maple Ridge Wind Farm's meteorological tower on Cobb Road in the town of Harrisburg, extending service to a portion of Tug Hill. However, testing still needs to be done to ensure RidgeviewTel's antennas don't interfere with the wind-measuring equipment, Mr. Jordan said.

DANC eventually plans to run a \$75,000 fiber-optic spur from its main line along Route 12 to the tower. The wind farm, which plans to use RidgeviewTel's services, is to pay \$62,500, with area towns covering the remaining \$12,500.

In Theresa, village trustees in mid-July authorized RidgeviewTel to place up to nine antennas on the village water tower and other high points on village property. And the company within the past week

has begun broadcasting signals from there, Mr. Jordan said.

The monthly cost for wireless Internet service through RidgeviewTel ranges from \$29.99 to \$59.99, with a one-time \$30 activation fee. Seasonal residents can reduce their bills to \$5.95 per month when they are not in the area.

RidgeviewTel and Premier Wireless both offer free service to partnering municipalities.

RidgeviewTel on Tuesday installed a receiving antenna on the roof of 7602 N. State St., at which the county leases first-floor space for the county attorney and Department of Social Services attorney. The new service appears faster than that of the county's current high-speed Internet provider, Time Warner Cable, said Thomas P. Gunn, Lewis County's director of information technology.

The county last year established a wireless computer network, with a transmitter at the county Public Safety Building on Outer Stowe Street and receivers at the Outer Stowe Street office building and the courthouse, Mental Health Department and Lewis County General Hospital, all on State Street. That allows all of them to be serviced through a single Internet account.

While a few non-connected buildings — like the county/DSS attorney building — now require separate accounts, RidgeviewTel's service should soon eliminate that need, plus provide a backup for buildings served by the main Time Warner account, Mr. Gunn said.

Area towns and villages also are expected to receive free Internet service from the company, he said.

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